

TO: Clerk's Office
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK



APPLICATION FOR LEAVE
TO FILE DOCUMENT UNDER SEAL

UNITED STATES

-v.-

JOSEPH GRUNWALD

24-MJ-6

Docket Number

SUBMITTED BY: Plaintiff ___ Defendant ___ DOJ ☒

Name: Vincent Chiappini

Firm Name: USAO-EDNY

Address: 271A Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Phone Number: 718-254-6299

E-Mail Address: Vincent.Chiappini@usdoj.gov

INDICATE UPON THE PUBLIC DOCKET SHEET: YES ___ NO ☒

If yes, state description of document to be entered on docket sheet:

MANDATORY CERTIFICATION OF SERVICE:

A.) ___ A copy of this application either has been or will be promptly served upon all parties to this action, B.) ___ Service is excused by 31 U.S.C. 3730(b), or by the following other statute or regulation: ___; or C.) ☒ This is a criminal document submitted, and flight public safety, or security are significant concerns. (Check one)

January 3, 2024

DATE

Vincent Chiappini

SIGNATURE

A) If pursuant to a prior Court Order:

Docket Number of Case in Which Entered: _____

Judge/Magistrate Judge: _____

Date Entered: _____

B) If a new application, the statute, regulation, or other legal basis that authorizes filing under seal

ongoing criminal investigation

**ORDERED SEALED AND PLACED IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE,
AND MAY NOT BE UNSEALED UNLESS ORDERED BY
THE COURT.**

DATED: Brooklyn, NEW YORK
January 3, 2024

U.S. MAGISTRATE JUDGE *Taryn A. Merkel*

RECEIVED IN CLERK'S OFFICE _____
DATE

WK:VC
F. #2023R00955

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
----- X

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- against -

JOSEPH GRUNWALD,

Defendant.

----- X

EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, SS:

Michael Buscemi, being duly sworn, deposes and states that he is a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, duly appointed according to law and acting as such.

In or about and between April through June 2023, both dates being approximate and inclusive, within the Eastern District of New York and elsewhere, the defendant JOSEPH GRUNWALD did, using one or more means of interstate and foreign commerce, to wit: the internet and mobile internet applications, knowingly attempt to persuade, induce, entice, and coerce an individual who has not attained the age of 18 years to engage in a sexual activity for which a person could be charged with a criminal offense, to wit: Forcible Touching in violation of New York Penal Law Section 130.52.

(Title 18, United States Code, Section 2422(b))

The source of your deponent's information and the grounds for his belief are as follows:

1. I am a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"). I am part of the Violent Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking Task Force with the

COMPLAINT AND
AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT
OF ARREST WARRANT

(18 U.S.C. § 2422(b))

No. 24-MJ-6

FBI, and I am a member of the Eastern and Southern Districts' of New York Project Safe Childhood Task Forces. Through my experience, I have been involved in a number of cases involving child exploitation and have become familiar with the manner in which acts of sexual exploitation of minors are committed. I am familiar with the facts and circumstances set forth below from my participation in the investigation; from my review of the investigative file, including the defendant's criminal history record; and from conversations with and reports of other law enforcement officers involved in the investigation.¹

2. As described below, GRUNWALD has communicated with a minor and has used the internet in furtherance of his sexual assault upon the minor.

3. On December 5, 2023, Individual-1 (a person whose identity is known to me) contacted a detective with the Ramapo, New York, Police Department concerning potential abuse by an adult of a family member, Child Victim-1.² The evidence described below indicates that this adult is 31-year-old JOSEPH GRUNWALD.

4. Individual-1 voluntarily provided two cell phones used by Child Victim-1 which have been reviewed for communications with GRUNWALD. Child Victim-1 identified for law enforcement the telephone numbers and Telegram usernames by which he communicated with GRUNWALD.³ As described in part below, evidence from the cell phones corroborates

¹ Because the purpose of this Complaint is to set forth only those facts necessary to establish probable cause to arrest, I have not described all the relevant facts and circumstances of which I am aware.

² Child Victim-1 turned 15 years old on November 1, 2023; the majority of the relevant conduct described herein occurred when Child Victim-1 was 14 years old.

³ Child Victim-1 knew GRUNWALD only as "Yossi" and "Yosef." He identified the man he knew as Yossi and Yosef as GRUNWALD by photograph during an interview with law enforcement. In addition to Child Victim-1's identification, law enforcement has confirmed that Yossi or Yosef was GRUNWALD, including through phone records and a review of photos sent

the information provided by Child Victim-1 in his interviews with law enforcement and has also been used to date events described in Child Victim-1's interviews.⁴

5. Beginning in approximately April 2023, GRUNWALD contacted Child Victim-1 via Telegram with the username "U."⁵ GRUNWALD asked Child Victim-1 whether he was a "bocher," a Yiddish term for a teenage boy. Child Victim-1 told GRUNWALD that he was only 14 years old. GRUNWALD identified himself to Child Victim-1 as "Yossi," which is a Hebrew variant of GRUNWALD's first name Joseph.

6. Over the following weeks, GRUNWALD continued to communicate with Child Victim-1 through Telegram. GRUNWALD steered these communications to sexual topics—asking Child Victim-1, for example, "aha you touch it? Your thing?" Early in their communications, GRUNWALD asked Child Victim-1 via Telegram whether Child Victim-1 was "hot" and sent him a series of emojis, including emojis holding a finger up in a "sh" expression and flushed face emojis. After some more discussion, GRUNWALD then asked him, "Do you go for those things?" GRUNWALD additionally stated with respect to his prior question, "I do it with teenagers every day." He followed that admission with an emoji holding a finger up in a

to Child Victim-1 by the man he knew as Yossi and Yosef. For ease of reading, "GRUNWALD" is used throughout this affidavit and complaint.

⁴ Messages exchanged between Child Victim-1 and Grunwald are quoted throughout this Complaint. Because those messages were almost entirely in Yiddish, I have relied on, and provide herein, preliminary translations of those messages. The dates ascribed to those quotes have been drawn from Child Victim-1's cell phones.

⁵ Telegram is a cross-platform instant messaging service that can be accessed on multiple types of devices, including smartphones, desktop or laptop computers, and other electronic devices like tablets. Conversations on Telegram are also "end-to-end encrypted" which essentially prevents anyone from reviewing the conversation other than the participants in that conversation. In my experience, Telegram is often used by those engaging in child exploitation offenses because of this level and type of encryption.

“sh” expression. Only a few messages later, GRUNWALD stated to Child Victim-1: “[W]ow, I like young boys. [thumbs up emoji]” The defendant eventually successfully used Telegram to entice Child Victim-1 to send the defendant via Telegram a picture of Child Victim-1’s penis.

7. Later in the same day he received the photo of Child Victim-1’s penis, GRUNWALD traveled to Spring Valley, New York, to the “shul” (i.e., synagogue) at which Child Victim-1 worshiped. Child Victim-1 reported that GRUNWALD instructed him to come outside so GRUNWALD “can look at [him].” Child Victim-1 complied. While staying parked in a dark-colored van, GRUNWALD watched Child Victim-1. After visually assessing Child Victim-1, GRUNWALD drove away and sent Child Victim-1 a message that Child Victim-1 was “hot fresh news.”

8. GRUNWALD also described to Child Victim-1 how he entices boys into engaging in sexual conduct with GRUNWALD. In particular, Child Victim-1 reported that GRUNWALD bragged that he buys things for boys who go with him.⁶ Child Victim-1 also reported that GRUNWALD boasted of taking boys who owe him a debt to the mikvah (a Jewish ritual bath) so that they can repay their debt by allowing him to see them naked.⁷

9. In conversations reported by Child Victim-1 and messages reviewed by law enforcement, GRUNWALD boasted to Child Victim-1 about his ability to purchase items for Child Victim-1. Specifically, he promised to Child Victim-1 via Telegram: “If you need anything, I buy it on Amazon[.] [Y]ou pay with cash[.] I buy it on my credit card.”

⁶ I understand that the Yiddish phrase Child Victim-1 used to describe GRUNWALD’s relationships with these boys has the connotation of engaging in sexual activity.

⁷ GRUNWALD also told Child Victim-1 that Child Victim-1 owed him such a debt.

10. Child Victim-1 reported that in June or July 2023, GRUNWALD arranged via Telegram to see Child Victim-1 on the premise that he would assist Child Victim-1 in obtaining a cell phone, which Child Victim-1 had told GRUNWALD he was too young to buy. GRUNWALD picked up Child Victim-1 near his shul and drove him to a dead-end road near Lake Suzanne in Monsey, New York. Upon arriving at the lake, GRUNWALD began talking about sexual topics. While Child Victim-1 was opening the cell phone and a gift card for him to load minutes onto the phone that GRUNWALD had provided him, GRUNWALD placed his hand inside Child Victim-1's pants and fondled Child Victim-1's penis and testicles for several minutes.

11. Based on the above information as well as further information, on January 2, 2024, the Honorable Taryn A. Merkl signed search warrants to search GRUNWALD's residence and cell phones for evidence of child pornography, threats and coercion and enticement of minors.

12. On January 3, 2024, members of the FBI executed those search warrants and recovered evidence from the premises. GRUNWALD was not present at the residence at the time that the warrants were executed.

WHEREFORE, your deponent respectfully requests that that an arrest warrant for the defendant JOSEPH GRUNWALD be issued so that he may be dealt with according to law. I further request that the Court order this application, including the affidavit and arrest warrant, be sealed until further order of the Court. These documents discuss an ongoing criminal investigation. Disclosure of this application and these orders would seriously jeopardize the ongoing investigation, as such a disclosure would give the target of the investigation an

opportunity to destroy evidence, harm or threaten victims or other witnesses, change patterns of behavior, notify confederates and flee from prosecution.

/s/ Michael Buscemi

Michael Buscemi

Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn to before me this

3 day of January, 2024

Taryn A. Merkl

THE HONORABLE TARYN A. MERKL
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of New York

United States of America

v.

JOSEPH GRUNWALD

Case No. 24-MJ-6

Defendant

ARREST WARRANT

To: Any authorized law enforcement officer

YOU ARE COMMANDED to arrest and bring before a United States magistrate judge without unnecessary delay
(name of person to be arrested) Joseph Grunwald,
who is accused of an offense or violation based on the following document filed with the court:

☐ Indictment ☐ Superseding Indictment ☐ Information ☐ Superseding Information ☒ Complaint
☐ Probation Violation Petition ☐ Supervised Release Violation Petition ☐ Violation Notice ☐ Order of the Court

This offense is briefly described as follows:

18 U.S.C. § 2422(b) - coercion and enticement

Date: January 3, 2024

Taryn A. Merkl
Issuing officer's signature

City and state: Brooklyn, New York

Taryn A. Merkl, U.S. Magistrate Judge, E.D.N.Y.
Printed name and title

Return

This warrant was received on (date) _____, and the person was arrested on (date) _____
at (city and state) _____.

Date: _____

Arresting officer's signature

Printed name and title

**This second page contains personal identifiers provided for law-enforcement use only
and therefore should not be filed in court with the executed warrant unless under seal.**

(Not for Public Disclosure)

Name of defendant/offender: _____

Known aliases: _____

Last known residence: _____

Prior addresses to which defendant/offender may still have ties: _____

Last known employment: _____

Last known telephone numbers: _____

Place of birth: _____

Date of birth: _____

Social Security number: _____

Height: _____ Weight: _____

Sex: _____ Race: _____

Hair: _____ Eyes: _____

Scars, tattoos, other distinguishing marks: _____

History of violence, weapons, drug use: _____

Known family, friends, and other associates *(name, relation, address, phone number)*: _____

FBI number: _____

Complete description of auto: _____

Investigative agency and address: _____

Name and telephone numbers (office and cell) of pretrial services or probation officer *(if applicable)*: _____

Date of last contact with pretrial services or probation officer *(if applicable)*: _____